United Nations ST/SGB/2008/12

Secretariat

1 August 2008

Secretary-General's bulletin

Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat

The Secretary-General, pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/282 of 5 January 1996, entitled "Policies to achieve gender equality in the United Nations", hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1
Functions

1.1 Departmental focal points for women shall be appointed in each department, office, regional commission and mission (hereinafter department/office/mission).

1.2 Departmental focal points shall provide support to the head of department/office/mission in fulfilling his or her responsibilities for the achievement of gender equality in the department/office/mission.

1.3 The network of the departmental focal points shall be coordinated by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

1.4 The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women shall be responsible for providing the departmental focal points with relevant training in order for the focal points to carry out the functions set out in the present bulletin.

1.5 Further details on the functions of the departmental focal points are set out below.

Section 2
Support for the head of department/office/mission

2.1 Departmental focal points for women shall support the head of department/office/mission in fulfilling his or her responsibilities for the achievement of gender equality in the department/office/mission by:

(a) Promoting greater awareness of gender issues and a gender-sensitive work environment in the department/office/mission;

(b) Providing advocacy and counsel to female staff in the department/office/mission;

(c) Monitoring progress towards the achievement of gender targets;

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(d) Contributing to the development and realization of gender targets as set out in the human resources action plans and the senior managers' compacts;

(e) Advising in the staff selection process, with a view to ensuring that the goal of reaching gender balance is taken into account.

2.2 Executive, administrative and other relevant responsible offices shall systematically provide the departmental focal points for women with the information they need in order to effectively exercise their functions, including:

(a) Staffing statistics of the relevant department/office/mission;

(b) Information on forthcoming vacancies in the department/office/mission, including temporary ones;

(c) Names of candidates for posts in the department/office/mission;

(d) Rosters of recommended candidates for posts in the department/office/mission.

Section 3
Participation in the staff selection process

3.1 Departmental focal points for women shall contribute to the evaluation of candidates, in the context of the staff selection process in departments/offices/missions, by:

(a) Reviewing applications from women candidates, including those on the rosters, to ensure that all eligible women candidates are given due consideration;

(b) Reviewing the list of recommended candidates prior to submission to the respective central review bodies to ensure that women candidates have been duly considered, and providing comments to the head of department/office/mission, as appropriate;

(c) Assisting programme managers in promoting gender balance on the interview panels;

(d) Observing, where feasible, interviews of candidates and expressing their views to the programme manager and the head of department/office/mission.

3.2 Departmental focal points for women may provide comments, through the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, to the relevant central review bodies in cases where eligible women candidates are not on the list of candidates recommended for vacancies in their departments/offices/missions.

3.3 At departments/offices/missions away from Headquarters where the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women cannot be represented on the local central review bodies, departmental focal points for women shall serve as ex officio advisers on the local central review bodies.

3.4 The departmental focal points for women shall advise the head of the department/office/mission with a view to ensuring that the gender perspective is taken into consideration in the selection of staff for vacant posts in the Professional category or above, including compliance with requirements in section 9.2 of administrative instruction ST/AI/2006/3 of 15 November 2006, entitled "Staff selection system".

3.5 The departmental focal point shall assist the head of department/office/mission in workforce planning with a view to promoting and retaining women in Professional posts in order to reach gender targets.

Section 4
Advocacy and counselling

4.1 The departmental focal points for women shall be available to counsel, advise and assist women staff within their departments/offices/missions on:

(a) Issues affecting their career development (e.g., career planning, work/life balance) or conditions of service, bringing their concerns, as necessary, to the head of the department/office/mission, staff of the Office of Human Resources Management or the local personnel office or Executive Office, and staff of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women;

(b) Methods to resolve and/or report situations involving harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination or abuse.

4.2 Departmental focal points for women shall provide advice and support training initiatives within departments/offices/missions on gender sensitivity, work/life balance and career path strategies, and encourage greater participation of women in training programmes.

Section 5
Monitoring

5.1 Departmental focal points for women shall regularly monitor progress made towards the achievement of the gender targets and participate in joint meetings between the Office of Human Resources Management or local administrative offices and department/office/mission managers to assess such progress.

5.2 Departmental focal points for women shall assist the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in monitoring efforts to achieve gender balance, including 50/50 gender distribution at the Professional level and above, and in evaluating measures taken to develop and maintain a gender-sensitive and supportive work environment and to enhance training and career development opportunities.

5.3 Departmental focal points for women shall promote the implementation of work/life balance policies, such as those set out in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2003/4 of 24 January 2003, entitled "Flexible working arrangements", in their respective departments/offices/missions. Executive, administrative and other relevant responsible offices shall systematically share with them relevant information on the implementation of such policies.

5.4 Departmental focal points for women shall assist the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in the development of policies and programmes for the achievement of gender equality in the Secretariat by contributing ideas, comments and experiences on issues affecting the status of women.

Section 6
Selection of departmental focal points for women

6.1 Departmental focal points for women should have a strong commitment to the goal of gender equality in the Secretariat and shall demonstrate the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.

6.2 Departmental focal points for women cannot be involved in any matter in which there reasonably could be a conflict of interest. Therefore, staff representatives, staff of the Executive Office and staff in the immediate office of the head of department/office/mission shall not be eligible for selection as departmental focal points for women. Departmental focal points for women who are also voting members of the relevant central review bodies shall recuse themselves from meetings of the central review bodies that are considering cases that have been reviewed by the focal points at earlier stages in the process.

6.3 Each department/office/mission shall select at least one departmental focal point for women. Each departmental focal point for women shall have an alternate. Candidates from the Professional and higher categories and from the General Service and related categories may serve as departmental focal points. The departmental focal points shall serve for renewable terms of two years.

6.4 The head of the department/office/mission shall invite expressions of interest from staff who are willing to serve as departmental focal points for women.

6.5 Departmental focal points for women shall be selected by the head of the department/office/mission following staff-management consultations at the departmental/office/mission level, in accordance with the provisions of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/274 of 28 September 1994, entitled "Procedures and terms of reference of the staff-management consultation machinery at the departmental or office level", or by a secret-ballot election held at the request of either the head of the department/office/mission or the staff representatives of that department/office/mission. The election shall be organized under the supervision of representatives of both the staff and the management of the department/office/mission concerned.

Section 7
Authority and respect for confidentiality

Departmental focal points for women shall have access to all information necessary for the discharge of their functions, as required. They shall have access to statistics on gender balance in their departments/offices/missions, as well as access to staff of the Executive Office or local personnel office, as well as to senior management of the department/office/mission, as required, to carry out their duties. The principle of confidentiality must be respected by all in the process of the focal points discharging their functions.

Section 8
Final provisions

8.1 The present bulletin shall enter into force on 1 August 2008.

8.2 Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1999/19 of 20 December 1999, entitled "Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat", is hereby abolished.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon
Secretary-General